

**Arab American Cultural Center
Inaugural Annual Report
2016-17**

building communities through arts & culture

Our Mission and Vision

The Arab American Cultural Center seeks to affirm the diverse needs of Arab and Muslim students; to increase awareness about Arab and Muslim cultures and histories; and to build community, solidarity, and safe spaces through the arts and culture, while promoting social justice, equality, and inclusivity at UIC and the Chicagoland area.

“Arab American Cultural Center felt like a home away from home, where I didn’t have to justify my accent or show where my country is on Google Maps. I’m grateful that UIC has recognized the need for a safe space for Arab students to celebrate their culture together and support each other at a difficult time.”

- Perla Shebli



In October 2016, the Arab American Cultural Center opened its doors at UIC. Since then, the ARABAMCC has been transforming the experiences of Arab and Muslim American Students at UIC and the campus at large. From our first event attended by over 150 students to a spectacular graduation celebration that will remain in our minds and hearts for years to come, the ARABAMCC has been enriching campus life while pioneering the development of cultural programming related to Arab and Muslim Americans in a university setting.



“arabamcc will help students like me explore themselves more openly knowing that they have a place where they can receive an extra layer of support. We need a space where we can shamelessly be who we are and grow as people.”
- Zaina Yacoub

a new beginning

In line with its mission and vision, the arabamcc rolled out the following initiatives in the year 2016-17. The events held to further these initiatives, attracted over 300 UIC students, staff and community members. The center also collaborated with other centers on campus and community organizations in the Chicago area on many of these programs as a way to build a stronger network of resources for the UIC and Chicago community at large.

Civic Dialogues & Social Justice

Walls or Bridges 11/29/2016
UIC Social Justice Initiatives organized this event with the ARABAMCC as one of many co-sponsors. Speakers, followed by small group discussions, helped attendees understand how the current political environment impacts students and research communities.

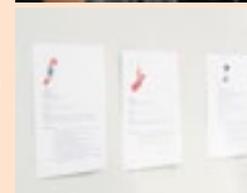
Halakat Nikash: Trump – What Now?: 1/17/2017
First of our Halakat Nikash [Discussion Circle] series. Provided students with a space for discussing difficult social issues. Students participated in an open-ended discussion to learn and listen to others while building collective strength and coping strategies for addressing some of the challenging issues of our times.

arab american cultural center 2016 -17 initiatives

Policing in Chicago 1/28/2017
A collaboration with the Sociology course 501, this community dialogue with representatives from local Arab American, Latino/a, and African American organizations discussed the ways that local and federal law enforcement agencies police their communities, how communities are responding, and the general challenges communities face under the Trump Administration

Halakat Nikash: The Muslim Ban (2 parts)
2/8/2017 & 2/15/2017
Second of our Halakat [Discussion] series. Discussed recent Muslim ban and created a task force to discuss ways to help impacted students

The first cultural center serving Arab Americans on a college campus in the United States.



**Know Your Rights/Beyond Legal Framework/
Know Your Power (3 part series)**

2/21/2017, 3/28/2017, 4/26/2017

Co-sponsored CCUSC event

Taking an intersectional approach, the Centers for Cultural Understanding and Social Change (CCUSC) presented a moderated discussion intended to help members of our campus community better understand their civil liberties.

Know Your Options

3/14/2017

This event offered options and resources for all students who are navigating issues of safety, well being, and empowerment at a time when persons perceived to be Arab or Muslim are facing distinct challenges. Panelists, including lawyers, mental health providers, and community activists led educational discussions on executive orders, immigrant rights, surveillance, hate violence, and civil rights.

Digital Security Training

4/5/2017

Digital security training with guest speaker from a local organization.



**Academic Support
Buddy System**

The ARABAMCC created a buddy system which partners international Arabic speaking students with UIC students who can assist them with language barriers that may impact their education and career goals.

*"The center to me means inclusivity and resistance. It means that anything is possible when we all work together towards the same goal."
-Oday Rafati*

Cocoa, Cookies and Cram

12/1/2016, 5/2/2017, 5/3/2017

The ARABAMCC provided a collective study space and academic support for students studying for finals

Advisor Conference

3/22/2017

Liberal Arts and Sciences advisors gathered for an informational session presented by staff from the Arab American Cultural Center. The presentation included general information about the newly opened Arab American Cultural Center and ways that LAS advisors can support the Arab students on campus.

ARAB AMERICAN
CULTURAL CENTER

المركز العربي

UIC

Arts & Culture

Shawerma Social

10/19/2016

This event included students, faculty, and staff from across campus to celebrate the opening of arabamcc and to gain exposure to the richness and beauty of Arab cultures and our campus Arab and Arab American communities.

**Layali Al Fan [Art Nights]: El Funoun
Dance Troupe**

11/15/2016

A collaboration with several Arab and Muslim student groups, this event featured a dance troupe and singer from Palestine, a UIC student poet, and an open mic. The international guests provided a workshop on using cultural expressions and art as a form of community building, reflection, and resilience.

**Layali Al Fan [Art Nights]: Al Fan
Midan [Art is a Square]/Egypt**

1/26/2017

This art night, with Chicago-based artists, showcased Egypt's Al Fan Midan, a historic event that took place in Tahrir Square where artists turned several streets of Cairo into a public art space to raise cultural and political awareness in the context of the Egyptian revolution of 2011. Together, attendees reproduced Egyptian street art.

Layali Al Fan [Art Nights]: From Iraq With Love

2/22/2017

This art night showcased cultural traditions from Iraq, including a home-cooked meal made by an Iraqi immigrant community member and games, music, and poetry brought to us by UIC's Iraqi students. This event honored the resilience of Iraqi people and cultures throughout this recent period of ongoing war and displacement.



Rise Up! Legal Clinic and Poetry

4/6/2017

An immigration lawyer led a discussion with students, staff, and faculty and answered their questions regarding current immigration issues. Art was used as a form of healing and students participated in poetry making and listened to poetry performed by our guests.



Halal If You Hear Me

3/9/2017

Halal If You Hear Me is a forthcoming anthology of writings by Muslims who are women, queer, genderqueer, nonbinary, or trans. This evening was filled with poetry and performances by Muslim artists celebrating intersectional identity and dispelling the notion that there is only one way to be Muslim.



The center gave me the opportunity to connect with my identity and culture. It connected me with amazing individuals who share the same identity as me and speak my language.

-Eman Alsamara



Duma Dolls Screening

4/12/2017

A collaboration with Chicago-based Arab American Family Services, this event featured the film Duma "Dolls" by Abeer Zeibak Haddad. This took place during sexual assault awareness month. The discussion focused on compassionate assistance on this issue with sensitivity to the cultural and linguistic needs of Arab Americans.

Sexual Assault Awareness Month T-shirt making for Break the Silence Rally

4/18/2017

In collaboration with UIC Women's Leadership and Resource Center/ UIC Campus Advocacy Network and UIC Undergraduate Student Government students made t-shirts for Sexual Assault Awareness Month(SAAM) for the Break the Silence Rally.

Comics, Culture, and Society

4/20/2017

This half-day symposium, in collaboration with the Asian American Cultural Center, included scholars, writers, and creators. Speakers discussed the production of graphic novels, science fiction, and comics.



highlight of the year: Knafeh, Zaffeh & a Graduation Hafleh

One of the first Arab graduation in the United States on any college campus. The event was attended by 200 people and had traditional dance performed by Chicago Zaffa group, food, music and much more.



thanks

African-American Cultural Center (AACC); Asian American Resource and Cultural Center (AARCC); Campus Advocacy Network (CAN); Department of African American Studies (DAAS); Department of Art; Department of Criminology, Law, and Justice; Department of Classics and Mediterranean Studies; Department of English; Department of History; Gender and Sexuality Center (GSC); Gender and Women's Studies Program (GWS); Global Asian Studies Program (GLAS); Institute for the Humanities; College of Letters Arts and Sciences; Latin American and Latino Studies (LALS) Program; Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy (IRRPP); Middle East and Muslim Societies Cluster; Native American Support Program (NASP); Office of Admissions; Office of the Chancellor; Office of the Dean of Students; Office of Diversity; Office of the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; Undocumented Student Support; Rafael Cintron Ortiz Latino Cultural Center (LCC); Social Justice Initiative (SJI); Women's Leadership and Resource Center (WLRC).

Student Groups

Muslim Students Association (MSA)
Saudi Students Association
Students for the Advancement of Freedom
Equality, and Human Rights (SAFEHR)
Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP)
Thakaat

These individuals volunteered their time and labor to help the center grow

Sarah Abboud, Professor
Ramzi Abudayyeh, Undergraduate Student
Jennie Brier, Professor
Andy Clarno, Professor
Anna Guevarra, Professor
Amanda Lewis, Professor
Nicole Nguyen, Professor
Junaid Qadri, Professor
Jane Rhodes, Professor
Gayatri Reddy, Professor
Muhammad Sankari, Community Member
Zamaan Sohel, Undergraduate Student
Karen Su, Professor
Rowida Zatar, Undergraduate Student



Staff

Nadia Alzerijawi, Undergraduate Student
Eman Alsamara, Undergraduate Student
Ahmed Albanna, Undergraduate Student
Monica Boctor, Undergraduate Student
Nesreen Hassan, Community Member
Stacey Krueger, Graduate Student
Ifrah Magan, Graduate Student
Nadine Naber, Professor
Sangi Ravichandran, Graduate Student
Sief Salamieh, Undergraduate Student
Asal Wahdan, Undergraduate Student
Aody Rafati, Undergraduate Student

CULTURAL CENTER
المركز الثقافي
UIC

CULTURAL CENTER
المركز الثقافي
UIC

CULTURAL CENTER
المركز الثقافي
UIC

ARAB AMERICAN
CULTURAL CENTER
المركز الثقافي
UIC



Designed and published by
UIC's Arab American Cultural Center, 111 Stevenson Hall
701 S Morgan St, Chicago, IL 60607